

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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S E C R E T CAIRO 3172

EXDIS

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: AEMR EG

SUBJECT: E & E PLANNING

REF: (A) CAIRO 3140; (B) STATE 204191

1. WE MUST RELY UPON THE DEPARTMENT FOR AN OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF THE POLITICAL/MILITARY SITUATION AS IT AFFECTS OUR POSITION HERE. FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT THINGS COULD BE TAKING A TURN FOR EITHER THE BETTER OR THE WORSE. IF FOR THE WORSE, WE MUST ANTICIPATE EVACUATION OF AMERICAN RESIDENTS FROM CAIRO EITHER AT GOE'S REQUEST OR ON OUR RECOMMENDATION TO THE DEPARTMENT. WE SEE OUR DECISION TO EVACUATE COMING PRIMARILY FROM MOUNTING ANXIETY WITHIN AMERICAN RESIDENT COMMUNITY CAUSED BY:

(A) INCREASED PHYSICAL DANGER DUE TO WAR ESCALATION (I.E., ISRAELI AIR OR MISSILE ATTACKS IN CAIRO AREA AND/OR ISRAELI GROUND ADVANCES ACROSS SUEZ CANAL);

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(B) PERCEIVED PERSONAL DANGER CAUSED BY INCREASED ANTI-AMERICAN TONE IN EGYPTIAN NEWS MEDIA AND/OR POSSIBLY ISOLATED ANTI-AMERICAN ACTS BY PALESTINIANS OR LESS SOPHISTICATED ELEMENTS OF EGYPTIAN SOCIETY; OR

(C) EVACUATION OF MAJORITY OF OTHER NON-ARAB RESIDENTS.

2. AT PRESENT, FROM OUR VANTAGE POINT ITEM (C) APPEARS TO OFFER A POSSIBILITY OF DEVELOPING TO POINT WHERE WE WILL BE OBLIGED TO RECOMMEND EVACUATION. ITEM (A) CAN ONLY BE ACCURATELY ASSESSED BY THE DEPARTMENT IN LIGHT OF CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS AND PLANNED ACTIONS.

3. CONCERNING ITEM (C), A FEW AMERICAN RESIDENTS--PEOPLE RECENTLY ARRIVED IN EGYPT OR WITH EXTENUATING REASONS FOR GOING--WILL DEPART EGYPT TOMORROW WITH AMERICAN TOURISTS BOUND FOR PIRAEUS. AMERICAN RESIDENTS HAVE NOTED WITH GOOD HUMOR THAT CERTAIN EAST EUROPEAN NATIONALS HAVE DEPARTED. SOME BECAME SLIGHTLY CONCERNED WHEN THE SWEDES AND GERMANS WERE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO EVACUATE. TODAY, MORE AMERICANS BECAME CONCERNED WHEN THEY HEARD CANADIANS "HAD DECIDED TO EVACUATE." WHILE CANADIAN EMBASSY IS SAYING THEY HAVE ONLY ADVISED WOMEN WITH SMALL CHILDREN TO DEPART EGYPT, CANADIAN STUDENTS AT CAC ARE TELLING AMERICAN CO-STUDENTS THAT THEY HAVE BEEN ORDERED OUT. PARTIAL CANADIAN DEPARTURE IS PARTICULARLY UNFORTUNATE BECAUSE AMERICANS ARE CLOSELY ASSOCIATED WITH THEM IN BUSINESS, SCHOOL AND SOCIALLY. IF OTHER WESTERN EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES ELECT THIS ROUTE, AND PRESSURE WITHIN AMERICAN COMMUNITY BEGINS TO MOUNT RAPIDLY, OR FACTORS (A) AND (B) COME INTO PLAY, WE MUST BE PREPARED TO EVACUATE SWIFTLY.

4. IN MY VIEW, THE FIRST PRECEPT WE SHOULD ACCEPT IN SUCH A SITUATION IS THAT WE MUST RELY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLY ON OURSELVES AND USG AGENCIES IN EXECUTING AN EVACUATION. (WE KNOW NOW IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO RELY ON GOE MINISTRY OF TOURISM, EGYPTIAN TRAVEL AGENTS, LONDON INSURANCE COMPANIES ON SUNDAY, GOG, GREEK SAILORS, ETC.)

5. THE SECOND PRECEPT IS, ONCE THE DECISION IS MADE, TO EVACUATE AS SIMPLY, QUICKLY AND COMPACTLY AS POSSIBLE. MIND-SECRET

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FUL OF THE TWO PRECEPTS, I PROPOSE THAT WE CONCENTRATE OUR EFFORTS ON A DEPARTURE BY SEA FROM ALEXANDRIA.

6. IF GOE WOULD ALLOW, BEST METHOD OF TRANSPORTATION WOULD BE AN MSTs SHIP IF ONE IS AVAILABLE. AN MSTs SHIP IS PREFERABLE TO ANY SIXTH FLEET TRANSPORT SHIP BECAUSE IT HAS NO MILITARY FUNCTIONS AND IS EQUIPPED TO HANDLE LARGE NUMBERS OF PASSENGERS. I DO NOT KNOW IF GOE WOULD PERMIT AN MSTs SHIP OR ANY OTHER US NAVY VESSEL TO LAND IN ALEXANDRIA. NEVERTHELESS, WE RECALL THAT IN JUNE OF 1970, EVACUATION AIRCRAFT ARRIVED IN AMMAN UNDER AUSPICES OF THE ICRC (WITH APPROPRIATE RED CROSS PAINTED ON THEIR TAILS) AND BELIEVE THAT SIMILAR ARRANGEMENT WITH MSTs VESSEL MAY BE

WORTH CONSIDERING.

7. ALTERNATIVELY, AMERICAN FLAG PASSENGER LINERS MAY BE AVAILABLE, OR ANOTHER GREEK SHIP--PERHAPS EVEN THE KNOSSOS ITSELF--MIGHT BE USED. THE IDEA OF A SPANISH SHIP MAY ALSO BE WORTH CONSIDERING SINCE SPANISH GOVERNMENT HAS A SPECIAL JOB IN PROTECTING US INTERESTS HERE. THE GREAT PROBLEM WITH THIS IS THAT IF THE WAR GETS WORSE AND/OR ALEXANDRIA HARBOR IS BOMBED, GOG AND GREEK SHIP OWNERS WHO WERE STINTINGLY COOPERATIVE IN GETTING TOURISTS OUT OF EGYPT MAY BE UNWILLING TO PUT SHIPS INTO ALEXANDRIA, WHATEVER THE INDUCEMENTS. IF WE ARE OBLIGED TO USE OTHER THAN AN AMERICAN FLAG SHIP, WE MUST BE CERTAIN THAT THE CREW IS ADEQUATELY COMPENSATED, FULLY UNDERSTANDS THE MISSION AND IS COMMITTED TO IT.

8. WE THEREFORE REQUEST THAT THE DEPARTMENT TAKE FOLLOWING ACTION:

(A) INVESTIGATE AVAILABILITY OF MST'S VESSEL FOR SOONEST DEPARTURE TO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN, AND OF SECURING RED CROSS OR OTHER INTERNATIONAL COVER FOR ITS USE; AND

(B) IF THIS SHOWS NO PROMISE BY COB FRIDAY, OF CHARTERING VESSEL CAPACITY FOR AT LEAST 800 PERSONS AND HAVING IT AVAILABLE TO ACCOMMODATE EVACUATION FROM ALEXANDRIA ON 18-24 HOURS' NOTICE AT ANY TIME DURING THE NEXT TWO WEEKS. VESSEL COULD AWAIT WORD FROM VICINITY OF CRETE OR CYPRUS OR EVEN REMAIN BERTHED AT LIMASSOL AS LONG AS IT COULD
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DEPART ON VERY SHORT NOTICE.

9. IF DEPARTMENT ACCEPTS ABOVE PLAN, WE BELIEVE SAFEHAVEN SHOULD LOGICALLY BE ATHENS, INSTEAD OF ROME AS SHOWN IN REF B.
SMITH

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